

## Obituary: Vincent D. Roth (1924–1997)

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Figure 1. Vincent D. Roth in 1979 at the Southwestern Research Station, Arizona.

*Abstract.*—A chronology of the life of Vincent D. Roth, one of the founding members of the American Arachnological Society and member of the Pacific Coast Entomological Society from 10 December 1965 until his retirement in 1986, is presented along with a list of his publications and taxa named in his honor.

It is with sadness that I report the death of Vince Roth, after an illness, on 27 July 1997 at his home in Portal, Arizona. To me, Vince was a mentor and friend for many years; as he was to numerous others in the Arachnological community. If the value of a person is to be measured in terms of the vacancy left behind,

then Vince's passing is indeed a great loss. No more his myriad notes and specimens scattered to numerous biologists around the globe; nor his newsletters describing travels to exotic places.

Vince was born as Vincent Daniel Roth on 12 February 1924 in Portland, Oregon, where he grew up with one sibling, his younger sister, Wilma (Willie). His father, Frank Xavier Roth, worked for the railroads, was born in Winböring, Altötting, Bavaria (as Francis Seraph Rott), of Bavarian and Bohemian ancestry, and immigrated to the United States as a child, in 1893. His mother, Mary Wiedmeyer, was from Richfield, Wisconsin, born to a German father and a Menomonee Indian mother. The earliest indication of Vince's entomological bent is from a photo, showing him at two or three years old dressed as a bumble bee. He attended the local elementary schools and was a good student but, in response to the illness and premature death of his mother, failed and had to repeat the 7th grade. From 1938 he attended Benson Polytechnical High School and completed 2.5 years of automotive and trade courses.

In 1941 Vince joined the U.S. Navy and was in Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 during the Japanese bombing. He remained in the Navy until the end of the war, completing machinist school and studying steam and diesel engines, eventually attaining the rank of Machinist Mate 1st Class. The Navy gave him an opportunity to travel throughout the Pacific and he visited ports from Korea to the Ryukyus, Philippines, New Guinea, New Caledonia, Galapagos, and Hawaii. This, no doubt, catalyzed his love of travel (despite the fact that Vince never overcame seasickness) which remained with him for the rest of his life. This was also the time that he read a book, E. W. Teale's *Grassroot Jungles*, which triggered his interest in entomology.

After the war, in 1946, he enrolled in Oregon State College, Corvallis, Oregon, and received a B.S. (1949) and M.S. (1951) in Entomology. From the onset he gravitated to entomology and soon became Curator of the insect collection; a job he kept throughout his stay at the college. In the summers he took employment in agricultural entomology, working on cranberry insects (under Dr. J. B. Rosenstiel) and surveying mosquitos (under Dr. A. Lindquist). Among his social activities, he was elected to the Phi Sigma Biological Society and the Sigma Xi Honor Society, joined the Entomological Society of America and the Society of Systematic Zoology, served as secretary of the Oregon Entomological Society, and became the president of the Square Dance Club on campus.

During this period Vince became interested in spiders. Unable to identify what turned out to be a black widow, he contacted Dr. Willis J. Gertsch of the American Museum of Natural History, who suggested he study Comstock's *The Spider Book* and possibly introduced him to Dr. Harriet Exline (Frizzell) of the University of Washington. Years later he spoke to me of his appreciation of her generosity, not only in the sharing of information and providing literature but, as was important to Vince, teaching him the pronunciation of the many elusive names in arachnology. Her influence is reflected in the fact that he followed up her studies of the western Agelenidae (s. l.). He collected avidly in Oregon, finding many new species, some of which he described in his thesis (on the Oregon species of *Cybaeus*) and in other papers. From that point on, agelenoid spiders became Vince's primary arachnological interest.

In 1952 Vince married Jean Louise Lamb in Milwauke, Oregon, and the fol-



Figures 2–7. Vincent D. Roth. Figure 2. With parents and sister in Oregon in 1935; Figure 3. Dressed as bumble bee in 1928; Figure 4. With wife, Jean, and daughter, Susan, at Salem, Oregon, during 1954–1955; Figure 5. With wife, Bobbie, and daughters, Kristin and Kim, at the Southwestern Research Station, Arizona, in 1969; Figure 6. With Willis Gertsch and Darrell Ubick at Tucson, Arizona, in 1996; Figure 7. With wife, Barbara, in front of “El Ghosto Blanco” at Portal, Arizona, in 1996.

lowing year they moved to Berkeley, California, where he enrolled at the University of California with the goal of continuing his graduate studies. These were curtailed shortly after the birth of their daughter, Susan Elizabeth (in 1954), when the family moved back to Salem, Oregon. Here Vince started employment with the Oregon State Department of Agriculture as a Survey Entomologist, where he sampled for insect pests, assembled collections, and promoted 4-H programs in entomology. The following year, however, a better position became available at the University of Arizona Experiment Station. Leaving his family in Salem, Vince moved to Yuma and, as Assistant Entomologist, worked on the "Yellow Clover Aphid Problem" to develop a control for the Spotted Alfalfa Aphid. Although he regularly visited his family in Oregon, the arrangement proved unsatisfactory and the following year Vince and Jean were divorced.

In 1956 Vince began his long field association with Dr. Willis J. Gertsch, of the American Museum of Natural History, by assisting him on a collecting trip through the western United States and Mexico. As Vince was a keen collector, he kept a steady stream of interesting spiders flowing to Willis; on one occasion donating a particularly large collection of Oregon spiders, for which he received Life Membership to the AMNH. He also accompanied Willis on three expeditions to California, in 1958, 1959, and 1960 (the last joined by Wilton Ivie), which probably represent the first major collection of spiders from this region.

A major turning point in Vince's career came in 1962, when he became the Resident Director of the Southwestern Research Station. The station, or SWRS, located in the scenic and biologically rich Chiricahua Mountains of southeastern Arizona, was founded in 1955 and directed by Dr. Mont Cazier for the AMNH. Cazier's sudden retirement in mid-1962 left a vacancy which was temporarily filled by Willis Gertsch, who in turn encouraged Vince to take the post. This he did eagerly, taking up residence at the station's "Log Cabin" in 1963 with his wife, Dorothea "Bobbie" Ann Thompson from El Centro, California, whom he married in 1961. They had a daughter, Kristin Ann, and some years later (1970) adopted Kim Lee (who was born as Hai Sook Jin in Seoul, Korea; in 1964, the same year as Kristin). After Vince's second marriage dissolved (1972), the girls continued living at the station until they moved to Tucson to attend high school (1975).

Apart from running SWRS, Vince continued to spend much time exploring the desert, and took numerous trips throughout the Chiricahuas and Sonora, Mexico, keeping detailed field notes of the places visited. Most of the time it was in his old white pick-up, which he named "El Ghosto Blanco", and which he (miraculously) maintained in working order. El Ghosto was always kept well stocked with survival and collecting gear to be available for field work at a moment's notice, which was often the case. Although spiders were his main love, Vince maintained a generalist's interest in biology and created the synoptic collection of the local fauna and flora at SWRS. He enjoyed inventing and created a miniature herbarium and plant press to facilitate plant identification in the field (Roth 1972). His passion for solving biological puzzles is well illustrated in "the case of the lost lizard", as he called it (1997). The horned lizard, *Phrynosoma ditmarsii* Stejneger, was known from only a few museum specimens, all collected at the turn of the century at an unknown locality in Sonora. Vince eventually discovered the locality by closely examining those parts of it that the lizards themselves had

collected, that is, ingested (Roth 1971, Lowe et al. 1971). Vince was also an outspoken conservationist and expended much effort to preserve the natural environment in the Chiricahuas. He actively worked to stop overgrazing, much to the consternation of the local ranchers, and his battle against noxious weeds was equally legendary; he always carried a shovel in El Ghosto for eradicating the latest incursion of horehound or Johnsongrass.

In his spare time, he continued taxonomic work on spiders. In 1962 he received a National Science Foundation Grant for a taxonomic study of the South American Agelenidae, at the California Academy of Sciences. He published several additional papers on agelenids during this period, along with several lists, including Galapagos spiders (with P. R. Craig 1970), nearctic Gnaphosidae (with D. Ubick 1973), Chiricahua Mountain spiders (with A. K. S. Jung 1974), and Yuma Co., Arizona, jumping spiders (with D. Richman 1976). His discovery of a new species of intertidal spider in Sonora (Desidae: *Paratheuma interaesta* (Roth & Brown)) resulted in a series of papers on spiders from this unusual habitat, mostly with W. L. Brown from 1975–1980.

In 1968, his close friend and mentor, Willis Gertsch, retired from the AMNH and moved to the nearby village of Portal. Soon other arachnologists retired and moved to this area, as did Dr. Findley Russell and Dr. Martin H. Muma, and many more visited each summer to where the Chiricahuas became a veritable Mecca for Arachnologists. Appropriately, the first meeting of the American Arachnological Society, co-hosted by Willis and Vince in August 1972, was held there. Vince continued being active in the AAS throughout his life, serving as Vice President (from 1973–1975), Director (1980–1982), member of the Editorial Board (1985–1986), and Archivist (1986–1997). At the 1993 meeting he introduced the Auction, which immediately became a popular and entertaining way of raising money for the society, as well as redistributing literature (much of which was donated by Vince). In 1995 the AAS honored Vince with a commemorative plaque, in recognition of his contributions to Arachnology and to the Society, of which he was a charter member.

A most important trip for Vince was in the winter of 1975–1976 to Costa Rica, where he met Barbara Maria Emmanuela Schröpfer, a midwife from Cham, Bavaria. The following year they were married in an elaborate ceremony at SWRS. Barbara assisted Vince in running the station, was a hostess to the many visitors, and helped Vince in the field and laboratory. In 1977 Vince acquired some property in Portal from Willis. The following year he and Barbara, with the help of an elderly carpenter, built a large and attractive house (dubbed Number One Spider Lane), to which they retired in 1986. In October 1996, they had twins, Daniel and Taran, one month prior to Vince's death.

After Vince's retirement, they embarked upon an ambitious program of world travel, visiting the following: Spain-Morocco-Egypt-Israel-Germany (September 1986–July 1987); South America (March 1988–March 1989); India-SE Asia (October 1989–April 1990); southern Africa (October 1990–April 1991); Madagascar (March–September 1992); eastern Africa (October–November 1992); Ecuador (January–December 1994); Siberia (Kiril Islands) (July–September 1995); Hawaii (1977, 1982, 1984, 1990, 1996). These trips produced rich collections of spiders, now mostly at the California Academy of Sciences, some at the Museum of Comparative Zoology. In addition to collecting, Vince and Barbara volunteered

their services in a number of ways. In Ecuador they spent an entire year running a field station, Cabañas Aliñahui (now known as Butterfly Lodge), located on the Rio Napo; and in Madagascar, three months conducting a spider survey in Ranomafana National Park. They routinely curated spiders at the various museums visited around the globe. Vince was appointed Research Associate at both the California Academy of Sciences and the Bernice P. Bishop Museum.

During this period Vince's spider work was devoted largely to compiling keys to the Nearctic genera, an ambitious goal given our limited knowledge of many families, and which he published as *Handbook for Spider Identification* (1982) and later as *Spider Genera of North America* (1985, 1993). For this, he interacted with many colleagues, eagerly gathering the latest taxonomic information and corrections for the next edition. This project was typical Vince: a collaborative effort to produce a usable and up-to-date key, available at a modest cost to a broad audience, and with the profits going to support arachnological research.

Vince is survived by his wife Barbara, sons Taran and Daniel, daughters Kim, Kristin, and Suzie, grandchildren Ajelina and Dylan, and sister Wilma.

#### TAXA NAMED AFTER VINCENT AND BARBARA ROTH

##### ARANEAE

- Aphonopelma rothi* Smith, 1995 (Theraphosidae)  
*Callobius rothi* Leech, 1972 (Amaurobiidae)  
*Castianeira rothi* Reiskind, 1969 (Corinnidae)  
*Cesonia rothi* Platnick & Shadab, 1980 (Gnaphosidae)  
*Euagrus rothi* Coyle, 1988 (Dipluridae)  
*Hesperocranum rothi* Ubick & Platnick 1991 (Liocranidae)  
*Indothele rothi* Coyle, 1995 (Dipluridae)  
*Legendrena rothi* Platnick, 1995 (Gallieniellidae)  
*Loxosceles barbara* Gertsch & Ennik, 1983 (Sicariidae)  
*Loxosceles rothi* Gertsch & Ennik, 1983 (Sicariidae)  
*Metazygia rothi* Levi, 1995 (Araneidae)  
*Misumenops rothi* Schick, 1965 (Thomisidae)  
*Neotama rothorum* Baehr & Baehr, 1993 (Hersiliidae)  
*Rhoicinus rothi* Exline, 1960 (Trechaleidae)  
*Theridion rothi* Levi, 1959 (Theridiidae)  
*Tibellus rothi* Schick, 1965 (Philodromidae)  
*Tricholathys rothi* Chamberlin & Gertsch, 1958 (Dictynidae)  
*Zimiromus rothi* Platnick & Shadab, 1981 (Gnaphosidae)

##### SOLIFUGAE

- Therobates rothi* Muma, 1962 (now *Eremochelis*, Eremobatidae)

##### CHELONETHIDA

- Diplotemnus rothi* Muchmore, 1975 (Miratemnidae)

##### OPILIONES

- Dalquestia rothorum* Cokendolpher & Stockwell, 1986 (Sclerosomatidae)

## ISOPODA

*Caucasonethes rothi* Vandel, 1953 (Trichoniscidae)

## DIPLOPODA

*Bdellozonium rothi* Chamberlin, 1950 (Polyzoniidae)

## CHILOPODA

*Stenophilus rothi* Chamberlin, 1953 (Geophilidae)

## COLLEMBOLA

*Friesea rothi* Christiansen & Bellinger, 1988 (Poduridae)

## ORTHOPTERA

*Grylloblatta rothi* Gurney, 1953 (Grylloblattidae)

## TRICHOPTERA

*Limnephilus rothi* Denning, 1966 (Limnephilidae)

*Ochrotrichia rothi* Denning & Blickle, 1972 (Hydroptilidae)

## COLEOPTERA

*Alaocybites rothi* Gilbert, 1956 (Curculionidae)

*Anilloferonia rothi* Hatch, 1951 (Carabidae)

*Bryothinusa rothi* Moore & Legner, 1975 (Staphylinidae)

*Catopocerus rothi* Hatch, 1957 (Leiodidae)

*Endeodes rothi* Moore, 1975 (Melyridae)

*Malthinus rothi* Fender, 1972 (Cantharidae)

*Pselaptrichus rothi* Park in Hatch, 1962 (Pselaphidae)

*Pseudohaida rothi* Hatch, 1957 (Staphylinidae)

*Rothium* Moore & Legner, 1977 (Staphylinidae)

*Scydmaenus rothi* Marsh in Hatch, 1957 (Scydmaenidae)

*Trigonoscuta rothi* Pierce, 1975 (Curculionidae)

## DIPTERA

*Euparyphus rothi* James, 1973 (Stratiomyidae)

## HYMENOPTERA

*Gryon rothi* Masner, 1979 (Scelionidae)

*Playaspalangia rothi* Yoshimoto, 1976 (Pteromalidae)

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